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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, January 1, 1935.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "The Bureau of Home Economics Looks Backward and Forward." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

Here's that annual day for reviews and resolutions, the day when we're supposed to look back over the old year and then look forward into the new. This is the day when all good housekeepers, for example, resolve to be even better at their job during the twelve months to come, when we all intend to improve on all errors of the past and profit by our experience.

And speaking of reviews and plans for the future in the line of housekeeping, I wonder if you heard about the talk that Dr. Louise Stanley gave not long ago the talk on recent scientific findings of interest to homemakers. Of course, I don't need to tell you that Doctor Stanley is Chief of the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and that she is sometimes spoken of as "the nation's number one housekeeper."

I'm going to quote Doctor Stanley today -- repeat to you what she had to say about backward and forward looks in her own Bureau.

"At this time of year," says Doctor Stanley, "I feel as though I were looking in two directions at once. It is only natural to look backward and see what we have accomplished during the twelve months behind us. But the urge is even stronger to look forward into the new year and plan how we can use the resources of science to improve and enrich home life. For, as I see it, that is the ultimate aim of home economics -- to help individuals and families to use the findings of science so that they may lead healthier, happier, and richer lives.

"In our research and extension programs, we work toward this by dealing with very definite, very practical questions. The food we eat; the clothes we wear the houses we live in; the way we spend our money and use our leisure time -- all these have a tangible and intangible effect on what we speak of now as 'the more abundant life.'

"I'll start with food first. Many of you are familiar with our food budgets and our diet plans at different levels of cost. They are simply guides to help people divide up their food dollars and plan their gardens and their home-food-production programs so as to get the essentials for good nutrition at whatever cost they can afford.

"As a background for these diet plans, we studied the finding of scientific nutrition workers from all over the world. We weighed evidence showing the relation between diet and health and the need for certain food substances to promote growth and well being. Then we gathered all the reliable records of what American farm families and city families eat in their own homes. It was interesting to see

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how American food habits reflect the ups and downs of good times and hard times; how they keep step with our modern ways of transporting and marketing foods; and how they have changed as our knowledge of nutrition has increased. With all these facts in hand, we then proposed four master diet plans. At the top of the scale is a liberal diet that we should like to see every family in the United States enjoy. It would raise the standard of nutrition and help ward off much of the illness and poor health that now comes as the result of improper food. By the way, these diet plans are written in such general terms that any family has plenty of room to choose the particular kinds of food it prefers in the different groups. We couldn't help laughing the other day when somebody asked whether we were trying to standardize American meals. Far from it. We are only trying to help you select from the great variety of foods available those that will safeguard good nutrition.

"Behind all our diet plans are studies of the foods themselves -- the calories they contain, the minerals, and protein, and vitamins. For example, this morning a report came to my desk of a study on the vitamin D content of different kinds of liver -- calf liver and beef and hog and lamb liver. This year we've also completed a study of the vitamin A and vitamin D content of eggs, as influenced by the feeding rations given to the hens. Every year nutrition workers complete many such studies. Thus we add to the growing body of knowledge about vitamins and minerals and what foods you can depend on to supply them in your meals day by day.

"We are also applying the scientific method to food preparation. Many of you have written to us for the new bulletin on meat dishes at low cost. Of course, people have cooked meat for centuries with more or less success. But it is only recently that home economists have worked out the scientific principles of meat cookery. For example, we roasted meat at high, low and medium oven temperature. Thousands of roasts all told. From careful records of these we've learned that the way to hold down the shrinkage and keep the juices in is to cook meat at as moderate a temperature as is possible. The old idea of searing to hold in juices is a myth.

"As an aid in judging the quality of textiles, we've started a series of buying guides. The leaflets on sheets and pillow-cases and ready-made dresses many of you know well. Perhaps after you saw these, you were disappointed when you went to the stores and couldn't find these facts about quality on the labels of the goods on sale. And the clerks couldn't help you much either. Well, I'm sorry to say that will continue to be the story until manufacturers put definite facts on the labels on textile merchandise. As a basis for helping you in buying textiles, we are studying the wearing qualities of cotton and wool fabrics made of certain grades of fibers. One such very technical report on three grades of cotton was published this year, and others are in progress. But many such scientific studies must be complete before we can give consumers the same help on textiles that we now give on food problems. But at least we are on our way.

"In these few minutes I have touched very lightly on only a few of the high spots. But these illustrate the scientific studies that the Bureau of Home Economics is now making. The results will come to you in practical terms through the Extension Service."

That concludes Miss Stanley's talk.

